

Listing of the Claims

1. (Currently Amended) A sports racquet having a tubular frame including a head portion defining a stringing area and a handle portion coupled to said head portion, wherein said head portion includes a plurality of opposed string holes formed in said frame and having string bearing surfaces for anchoring the ends of a first set of string segments extending in a first direction and the ends of a second set of string segments extending in a second direction, wherein said string holes are positioned to provide a predetermined spacing between contiguous string segments in each set, characterized in that at least one of said string holes is a first enlarged string hole having at least two string bearing surfaces for securing the ends of a pair of contiguous string segments of said first set at said predetermined spacing[.], wherein said first set of string segments are cross string segments and said second set of string segments are main string segments, wherein said head portion includes a throat bridge having a plurality of contiguous enlarged string holes for anchoring a plurality of main string segments, said throat bridge having opposite ends, wherein each opposite end is split to allow outlying main strings to pass through said throat bridge, and wherein the split ends define a bearing surface for securing a main string in said throat bridge.

2. (Original) A sports racquet according to claim 1, wherein said frame has at least a second enlarged string hole opposed to said first enlarged string hole such that the opposite ends of a string segment can be received in both said first and second enlarged string holes.

3. (Original) A sports racquet according to claim 2, wherein said first and second enlarged string hole are staggered relative to one another.

4. (Original) A sports racquet according to claim 3, wherein said racquet includes at least one string having a plurality of string segments connected by connecting portions, wherein said at least one string extends through said string holes such that said string segments extend within said stringing area and form an interwoven string bed lying generally in a string bed plane, and said connecting portions extend along outer surfaces of said frame, wherein said at least one string is under tension, and wherein said outer surfaces act as bearing surfaces to counteract the tension of the strings.

5. (Original) A sports racquet according to claim 4, wherein said frame includes a plurality of contiguous enlarged string holes.

6. (Original) A sports racquet according to claim 5, wherein said enlarged string holes are oval in shape and whose major axis lies in said stringing plane, and wherein said holes have opposing ends along said major axis which form said string bearing surfaces.

7. (Original) A sports racquet according to claim 3, wherein said frame includes an inner surface facing said stringing area and an outer surface facing away from said stringing area, and wherein each enlarged string hole is defined by a pair of opposed interior walls of said

frame extending between said inner and outer surfaces, thereby forming a truss-like internal structure.

8. (Original) A sports racquet according to claim 7, wherein said interior walls lie on opposite sides of the stringing plane.

9. (Original) A sports racquet according to claim 8, wherein said frame includes a first plurality of contiguous enlarged string holes and a second plurality of contiguous enlarged string holes which are opposed to said first plurality, and wherein said frame includes interior wall portions extending between each contiguous pair of enlarged string holes, and wherein said interior wall portions lie in the stringing plane and underlie the connecting portions of the strings.

10. (Original) A sports racquet according to claim 9, wherein said interior wall portions are coextensive with said interior walls.

11. (Currently Amended) A sports racquet according to claim 3, wherein said frame includes a plurality of contiguous enlarged string holes, and wherein said racquet includes a ~~soft rubber~~ grommet strip having grommets extending through said enlarged string holes, and an outer strip ~~made of a harder material which overlies~~ overlying said grommet strip and against which the connecting portions of the strings bear.

12. (Original) A sports racquet according to claim 11, characterized in that each said grommet includes a pair of small, parallel holes for receiving a pair of string segments.

13. (Cancelled)

14. (Cancelled)

15. (New) A method for molding a composite sports racquet having string holes having at least two string bearing surfaces, comprising the steps of:

- a. placing a first tube of a material suitable for forming said racquet into a mold to form an upper portion of said racquet;
- b. placing a second tube of a material suitable for forming said racquet into said mold to form a lower portion of said racquet;
- c. placing a plurality of mold elements at locations corresponding to said string holes, said mold elements having a cross sectional shape of the desired shape of said string holes, said cross-sectional shape defining at least two string bearing surfaces thereon;
- d. closing said mold such that said plurality of mold elements are captured between said first and said second tubes;
- e. heating said mold such that said first and said second tubes are fused together in said areas between said mold elements, forming an integral, common wall; and
- f. removing said racquet from said mold and removing said mold elements from said racquet.

16. (New) The method of claim 15 further comprising the step of pressurizing said first and second tubes during said heating step.

17. (New) The method of claim 15 wherein said material suitable for forming said racquet is an uncured composite material having a component which will flow to fill said mold when subjected to heat and pressure.

18. (New) The method of claim 15 wherein said material comprises a fiber-reinforced resin.

19. (New) The method of claim 15 wherein said material comprises an epoxy resin or thermoplastic.

20. (New) The method of claim 15 wherein said mold elements are not uniform in at least one of size, shape and orientation.

21. (New) The method of claim 20 wherein said mold elements are ovoid in cross sectional shape and have major axes of varying lengths.

22. (New) The method of claim 15 wherein said mold elements have a shoulder defined at one end thereof such as to produce a radius at the inlet of said string holes.

23. (New) The method of claim 15 wherein said mold elements have a shoulders defined at both ends thereof such as to produce radii at both the inlet and the outlet of said string holes.

24. (New) A sports racquet having a frame with a head portion surrounding a stringing area, wherein said head portion comprises:

a. an upper tube member; and

b. a lower tube member,
wherein said upper and lower tube members are joined along a mating surface substantially in the plane, parallel to the plane or oblique to the plane of said stringing area, to form said head portion of said frame, said upper and said lower tube members defining a plurality of enlarged string holes, each of said string holes extending from the outside of said head portion to said stringing area, said string holes having two or more string bearing surfaces.

25. (New) The sports racquet of claim 24 wherein said upper and lower tube members are joined using an adhesive.

26. (New) The sports racquet of claim 24 wherein said upper and lower tube members are joined using an epoxy resin.

27. (New) The sports racquet of claim 24 wherein said string holes are not uniform in at least one of size, shape and orientation.

28. (New) The sports racquet of claim 27 wherein said string holes have a cross-sectional shape selected from a group consisting of polygonal, diamond-shaped, teardrop-shaped, octagonal-shaped and a shape having ovoid ends and concave areas between said ovoid ends.

29. (New) The sports racquet of claim 27 wherein said string holes define three or more string bearing surfaces.

30. (New) The sports racquet of claim 28 wherein said string holes have an ovoid shape and have major axes of varying lengths.

31. (New) The sports racquet of claim 28 wherein said string holes are generally rectangular in shape.

32. (New) The sports racquet of claim 30 wherein said major axes of said ovoid-shaped string holes vary in orientation with respect to the plane of said stringing area.

33. (New) The sports racquet of claim 24 wherein said string holes define a radius at each of said of string bearing surfaces.

34. (New) The sports racquet of claim 24 wherein said string holes define a string guide at each of said string bearing surfaces.

35. (New) The sports racquet of claim 34 wherein said string guide comprises a notch or a groove.

36. (New) The sports racquet of claim 24 wherein said upper and said lower tube members define a plurality of smaller string holes in addition to said plurality of enlarged string holes.

37. (New) The sports racquet of claim 24 further comprising a plurality of grommets extending through all or a subset of said plurality of enlarged string holes.

38. (New) The sports racquet of claim 36 further comprising a guide strip connecting two or more of said grommets.

39. (New) The sports racquet of claim 37 wherein said grommets define one or more channels in the body thereof for the passage of strings therethrough.

40. (New) The sports racquet of claim 39 further comprising a guide strip connecting two or more of said grommets.

41. (New) The sports racquet of claim 37 wherein each of said grommets has a cross-sectional shape substantially similar to that of the respective enlarged hole through which said grommet extends.

42. (New) The sports racquet of claim 41 further comprising a guide strip connecting two or more of said grommets.

43. (New) The sports racquet of claim 39 wherein one or more of said grommets are solid.